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THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

∴ AND OTHER POEMS ∴

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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"THE SAILOR WHO HAS SAILED AND OTHER POEMS"
AND
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TO

MY LITERARY FATHER CONFESSOR

AND

GENIAL FRIEND

THOMAS WALSH

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THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

∴ AND OTHER POEMS ∴

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

I

There is a beauty, after all is said,
Unreached forever. Not when music dies,
And earth dissolves in rapture of deep sighs;
Not by the dance, down glades of moonlight fled;
Nor poetry, echoing death-chants to the dead,
Is it unveiled: and yet, so near it lies,
The lonely wanderer feels its faunlike eyes,
And almost has it—by a turn of head.
A rainbow spirit, tokened with unrest,
It brushes wings, indues its deity,
For half a glimpsing-time; and then—is flown,
A vanishing of rose leaves through the West,
A shining prevalence wasting on a blown,
Blue distance of pale, impermanent sea.

II

Who, in tall ships, intrepid, from the land
Into the sunrise haste the stars away,
Buoyant, beyond the sallow sweet of hay,
Warm, still, with afternoon; beyond the bland,
Broad peaceful haven where are white sails fanned
Soft, through the twilight; out upon the grey,
Adventurous blind deep; they, truly, they
The wonders of the Most High understand.
Yet, as in yore was homesick Charlemagne,
Upon the brink of his own fairest France,
Haunted by echoes which the Pyrenees
Spoke him, of Roland's horn far back in Spain,—
Ever and ever, over all the seas,
Float the faint bugles of love's variance.

III

Like the soft changes in a woman's eyes
Beside the fire, who, dreamingly withdrawn
Down distant by-ways where her youth has gone,
Now, chin in hand, makes happy enterprise
Of memory; or like first spring that hies,
With shadows of sweet April, up the lawn;
So is the sea, immediate with dawn,—
With one plumed planet scanning the proud skies.
Into the deep subsides the living dark,
And over it, just breathing, breaks the rose;
Then a white wave-top, washing the far rim,
Wakes, and the sea is lonely for one bark;—
Lonely as beauty, lonely as love to him
Who, fain to follow, knows not where it goes.

IV

To meet sea mornings, leaning from the bow,
Idly, I've wantoned many an airy hour
With pretty iris wreaths of sun and shower,
Where sheared through briny acres the sharp prow;
And in mid-ocean, following that plough,
Watched the slow curling of its built-up power
Ripen a blue past April's; loose a flower
Rarer than earth-born ever budded bough.
Even as sorrow, holden from the light
A long, long while, in sudden, swift surprise
Looks forth, relinquishing, when joy comes true,
And is, just then, most beautiful; so, might
Each prisoned deep be sorrow, that breaks through;
Breathes; out-heavens heaven; sings; laughs—and dies.

V

When the blue sea is bitten with sharp
wind,
And gathers panic even as it goes,
Right to the southward, bellowing its woes
To the bare sky, I wonder if some mind
There be not, far to land but intertwined
With it, that crying, southward also flows,
And in the swaying of a garden rose
Leans beyond years to a lost love behind.
And when the sea-light gradually dies
From wave to wave, a grieving wanderer,
It is, then, unto me, as if there came
The quiet aching in a young lad's eyes—
Expectant eyes, all glowing with young
flame—
Who sees his first love fade, and does not
stir.

VI

A blink of sunlight on the cabin floor;
A scouring-out of port-holes with wet sea;
Laughter on deck; a song along the lee;—
The ships, the old, old ships, are young once more:
Younger than Nineveh, younger than the shore
Of blue-beguiled Iberia, or free,
Imperial Knossos, skilled in victory;—
Younger than these, yet olden long before.
Butting the head-seas, joyous, once again,
They clew close down and let their scuppers run
With gusty music-chucklings, and bright foam.
After them! — follow them! — galleon fleets of Spain,
Beaks from the North, and triremes of great Rome!—
Reached not the Happy Islands?—none? Not one.

VII

Like music stilled, that very far away,
Goes treading, in the foot-prints of a tune;
Or like pale twilight, sad for afternoon
Lost, it was comrades with but could not stay;
There is a singing waked, a gleam of day
Divine and dying, when the romantic moon
Walks with the lonely sea; a radiance strewn
Of some great passing, none can mourn as they.
Love is remembrance, an aroma rare
Of some dear, doorway guest, who, hardly known,
Smiled, and went on (we will not say, who died);
Leaving her semblance on a turning stair,
Forever after, tender—amid stone.
Sea; moon; a third? Nay!—there is none beside.

VIII

When love has lost, it does not trouble long
With the reproachful deep, but looses rein
To leeward of the first free wind; astrain
For shallows and the oblivion of strong,
Indignant reefs, obstreperous in song.
It will not bear the brooding night again,—
The starlit tides that tore its heart in twain;
But breaks upon the beach its time-old wrong.
Love that has lost will build itself a fire
On cliffs of unrived rock; will sleep on stone,
And scoop the flint for water from the sky:
Betrayed, it spurns the sea, forswears desire,
And rid of dreams will henceforth live and die.
A flower-root fills a crack; and peace is flown.

IX

A flower to tell the wind with, lightly; yet
So prinked in purple, printed so with blue
Of the real sky (love's token to bestrew
With sky) as might, from a proud parapet,
Lord it on leagues of roses; newly met,
Out of white dreams of unenduring dew
Awakened—proof enough; the world is new—
Open my heart, now; take this violet?
But, pain of passing, pictured in its face
The very heaven it holds is still too high,
A hand's breadth, to be climbed to; still too far
For more than wanting of; this flower, this place
Eternal, by one touch of beauty, are,
And will not fade: it is I that must die.

X

When on warm fields the bloom goes wandering,
And little woodland paths let in the May;
When throats of song have lips of apple-spray,
And down long twilights drift the stars of spring;—
Perverse I am!—it were a happy thing
To brush one petal cheek, and end there: they,
Blithe birds and flowers, are free; I go alway,
Cinctured with shadows of remembering.
Love should not wear so beautiful a smile,
When life can look beyond it in a year:
Lilacs, returning, speak the gentleness
The last ones gave, forgotten for a while.
The lovely last ones!—they too lived, no less;
Now are no more; then joy is not just here.

XI

By token of red leaves that wrinkle brown,
And harvest stooks in phalanx of rich gold;
By lakes dark-ruffled with marauding cold
(That slept, and now the lily-pads turn down);
By its own just, infallible renown,
When Autumn signals, being very bold,
I answer: "Hasten, monarch, and take hold!
Wreathe white with frost: wear the great sunset crown!"
Then, seeing Summer's pained, reproachful eyes
Turned backward down the distance of a glade,
Her hands unclasping flowers and letting fall,
Her pace dejected as of one who tries
No longer to win happiness at all,
Joy is struck dead, for knowing her betrayed.

XII

Like as an arrow, loosed against the night,
Impales Capella of the Charioteer,
Or lunges into Perseus like a spear,
Proud and predominant in upward flight,
Then, ere a single star has bloomed more bright,
Feels courage dwindle, die, and disappear;
So love leaps up, and so, in heaven's tier,
Tainted with earth, slips backward from delight.
There is a waywardness belying bliss,
A warp against the current of all joy;
A knock, inimical, upon the door,
Forbidding rapture; a dark precipice
That, cross who may, will not let laughter o'er;—
A canker seeking rose-buds to destroy.

XIII

Spirits there are, intuitively great,
Who will not own the serfdom of desire,
But when the cinders of their first-blown fire
Cease to be stars, and rain down desolate,
Rise up, go forth, and eye to eye with fate,
Of common, coarse-cut stone and tight-strung wire
Make statues that are god-heads, and a lyre
Whose lifted song long years reverberate.
They hate the little limits that hedge in
Joy, and the narrowness of each new day;
Despise old gifts, and out of raw defeat
Rear their own heaven's roof for dreams to win;
Making obeisance at a Mercy Seat
Never more earth's. Then they too pass away.

XIV

As on cold window-glaze the sunset burns,
Beyond a strait where grey-plumed sea-
birds cry,
So, in carved sepulchres, the great dead lie
Illuminate, long after funeral urns
Have spilled their dust on centuries; re-
turns
Forever, so, a glory down the sky,—
A lyric gladness each brave soul spread
high,
One stave above the stature thought dis-
cerns.
Almost it is as if another air
Were round these relics, full of cloudy
gold
And twilight tints, a different place and
time,—
Sequestered, like a quiet sea-cove, where
Waves become dreams, and booming
rocks, the chime
Of distant church-bells indolently tolled.

XV

Not differently to-day Ægean blue
Edges long-silent Hellas with sweet sound;
The night wind wanders inland and is drowned
In just such groves as faned Apollo knew.
Where went that art which anciently could hew
Stones into beauty lifted from this ground
Such length of dreams? Something is lost they found,
A moon-beam's breadth beyond men's grasp that grew.
They found: the hungry, out-of-heart, who spent
One shoulder's heave at heaven, and passed on,—
Up the dim thrust their yearning columns gave,
Athwart the calm of pure-browed pediment
And straight-lipped truth of stringent architrave,—
Unto their goal; leaving—the Parthenon.

XVI

Death is the deathless flower when loved ones die;
Containing them in sweetness out of time;—
The lotus-lily breathed up by this slime,
In whose deep cup our tears of longing lie
And mirror on remembrance, as the sky
Is caught in fountains tinkling in clear chime—
Each drop a ripple and each tear a rhyme—
Blurred and becalmed but never quite put by.
Yet even here is beauty that still fades,
As, leaf by leaf, the fresh-cut coronal
Fades, and the light fades, and stars, and April snows.
Oh, bubble dome and dreaming colonnades;
Young Shah Jehan, young love and deathless rose;
Ganges and bodies and white Taj Mahal!

XVII

Pilate said: "What is truth?" Death answered him;
And Druid blocks and dolmens of strange stone,
Once wet with blood, were dry and lichen-grown,
Because death answered him. Then, in the dim
North twilight, brooding bent-browed by the brim
Of long-aisled forests, lifted-up, alone,
Men dreamed, and lo, the Gothic, and the blown,
Exhilarant wings, roofing, of cherubim.
Beneath the minster towers what hymns have rolled;
How rich in prayers alluvial it stands,
The kindle on it still of dragon fire,—
Of crescent flames and Christ-crossed shields of gold!
Beauty unhelmed her here, as knight to sire,
Once. Saith the spirit: "Temples not made with hands."

XVIII

Now proudly to the sea-front once again
Love presses, leaving heedlessly behind
Her house, her garden, all her kith and kind,
For trouble that her heart has, for pure pain
Deep down within her, when the hot, gold grain
Gathers cool shadows from the billowy wind;—
Athirst she is, and stumbles headlong, blind,
To thrust her forehead seaward in disdain.
And there, upon the brink, she bides at last,
Her dreams but at beginnings, her whole sea
Only the singing borderland of sound.
How, nearly flown, earth-tied through ages past,
Beauty still baffles her, yet breathes her round;—
Headless, sans arms, defeated Victory!

XIX

When Da Vinci painted his Gioconda, so,
He verged by stealth on Beauty's holiness,
And would have had her naked truth, unless,
Just as he came she had not chanced to go;
Leaving him staggered, all his heart aglow
With one, arch, backward look, one veiled caress,
And one pale instant of the prophetess,—
Blended and blinded in one smiling No.
He wrote that smile along his lady's lips,
Indelible, unfading;—flowerlike, rare
And momentary mouth! Winds have gone by,
Bearing baled merchandise on old-world ships
Into a listening, luminous, lost sky.
Lady, dead lady, art thou also there?

XX

Artist and canvas, fancier of dreams
Disintegrate in moonlight, reader mild
Of countenances, wonder-drinking child
Poring upon wind whimsies, and the gleams
Of leafy sunlight fallen down dark streams;—
In all his ways how elfish and wood-wild,
How deep in contemplation, but beguiled
By each least glint how liberally, he seems.
For hurt of beauty ebbing at the brim,
Even as lips approach it, he makes prayer
Of painting, offers his uplifted eyes
For just one chink of heaven to hold for him;
And, haply, has it, ours forever, there.
He fails, though, for all that. Beauty still dies.

XXI

In texture of deep tides that thwart and bind,
Dumb and imprisoned under weighty woe,
Until an ocean heaves, and great waves go,
Heart-sobbing, into exile; then, all shined
With muted moonlight, reaching into blind,
Long-quiet coves, on wet sands weeping low;—
Plead, violins; impassioned trumpets, blow!—
Music her mantle dons; earth fades behind:
And Love, in dreams, besieges empty halls
For that desired and dear one, gone before,
Whose old-rose fragrance lingers, like a sky
Misleading stars. How hauntingly she calls
Into the darkness where faint footsteps die!
Poor fool; in vain. They pass that way no more.

XXII

Clad in a song, with loops of early flowers
Lavished about her shoulders, Poetry, maid
Of bird-like mimicry and escapade,
Tilts her top notes on wafts of petal showers,
Or, mænad in the moonlight, overpowers,
With frolic mirth, a melancholy glade:
A little weary, then, prone in the shade,
Saddens a tune with crowns and crumbled towers.
But see her in her age, her bloom all spent,
Her wreaths of April withered and awry,
Sitting with hands meek-folded, eyes afar,
In tragedy of truth made evident;—
Speaking plain words in quiet, till a star
Completes her contemplations with a sigh.

XXIII

Words are to dreams a wired and golden
cage
Wherein, made captive, some enchanting
bird
Is listened to for music that is heard
In wooded freedom only; or a page
Of butterflies, wing-spread for pilgrimage,
But never, never flying, nor bestirred
By happy preference: each printed word
A theft from youth, all overgrown with
age.
Remembrance of a momentary bliss,
The flash of wings when Beauty crossed
the blue;—
To speak—can arms encircle empty air
And so enact the quiver of a kiss?
Always that pain and always that despair:
Yet there are hearts with singing all shot
through.

XXIV

One maiden knee emerging, one bared limb,
Modelled Diana's own, nerved and astrain,
A path of moonlight—Dancing breaks in twain
The thousand ages gone. About the rim
Are all earth's unspoiled children, dim
And dear: she leads them forth again;
Weaving round youth a joyous old refrain,—
An antic rhapsody of flute and hymn.
So leaped they in the forests, long ago,
And so grew languid, feeling love draw nigh.
Oh, bounding blood, and shiver of young flame!—
By touch of lips eternity to know;
To clasp immortal wedlock without shame!
The moment passes. We too? Yes, we die.

XXV

A summer beach, warm drowsing; clean, wet sand
With filling footprints; boys and girls and sea.
Here, hose and shoon discarded, rapturedly
They run the gauntlet; here, linked hand in hand,
Adventure off their native bridge of land—
Foam-deep to instep, ankle and then knee—
To scurry home again in panic glee,
With clothes caught high, and limbs all shining tanned.
Beauty wafts inland, Love to seaward blows,
And meeting, part, and parting, meet no more.
One golden moment blended, they are still;
In children, in the bud-break of a rose.
The petals bloom, the childish zest burns chill:
The wind is desolate upon the shore.

XXVI

Is man a wave whose reach is not yet run?
Will dreams surge higher after he has died?
Take yonder youth poised at the trestle-side,
Sans clothes, damp-haired, a poem of sea and sun;—
Replaces his smooth breed a shaggier one?
Will eagles' wings be some day deified?
It may be. But more beautiful in pride
Than this bright body is there shall be none.
A heap of dust which any windy day
Might hoard in one right-angle of brick wall;—
Ruins of time have crumbled out for this,
And groping æons ached their hearts away.
Imperishable plan; frail edifice!—
The tides turn seaward and the dead leaves fall.

XXVII

Museum maunderings! A shelf of bones;—
Old yellow skulls with matted hair and stain
Of time's erosion; death's-heads with migraine,
Set out to cool, so many fresh-cooked scones.
What of them? Measurements; cephalic zones;
The long and short of them? Nay!—but again
To kindle here a burning human brain,—
A flickering spirit—on these altar stones.
Somewhat was here, snuffed out; some smouldering fire;
Some incense not just earthly, so it seems.
No mollusc this, a flaccid fill of shell,—
But crowded to its roof-trees with desire. . . .
Once through these windy corridors there fell
The backward laughter of departing dreams.

XXVIII

Like as the straight blue sea curves round
at last,
And like as stars in open midnight lie
Storied from bud to drooping, all gone-by
Years but as naught, on that great curtain
cast;
So here, upon a shelf, time's toil spun fast,
The drift shows; skull to skull is progress;
cry
Victories over victories, then die
To nearer beauty, up the trudged-out past.
There is a current speaks in human veins,
Deeper than the proud pulse admits; a
flow
Unswerving; a repeated, farewell word,
With ground-bass of great surges, life re-
tains
Dim memory of, from some far sea-coast
heard,
Adventure's morning, voiceless moons ago.

XXIX

Unyielding ruins stretched in acrid smoke,
Behold how Rheims, her beauty all laid bare,
The lovelier for defacement, still more fair,—
More heaven at heart for each new devil stroke,
Outbraves her garments. What a tongue they spoke,
Who, long since dead, could character, four-square,
The great escutcheon of good courage there;
Firmer than granite, stalwart more than oak!
And this rank skull, eyes empty, mouth agape,
Mortality's residuary, found,
Spilt-on by death, in some contemptuous ditch,
More nobly than in life outdreams the ape
By heights prefigured of; not reaching which,
It sowed with faith the undisheartened ground.

XXX

There is a house, wide-elbowed, nudging trees,
A hilltop under it, the friendly stain
Grown over it, of wind and sun and rain;
Whose door, swung open, gives on reveries.
A garden sways behind it, of whose bees
Are 'cello thrums; and indoors, the refrain
Of blundering flies upon a window-pane:
But silence hangs the walls like draperies.
Weathered without, drawn ghostly sweet within,
Still, faint it vibrates an old music, still,
An antique beauty lifted over years,
Like waves in moonlight welling very thin
At tide-turn: softly, to attentive ears,
Frays out once more its long-gone good and ill.

XXXI

Houses have hauntings, on warm afternoons
Drowsy with sweet siesta, at the door
No kindled voice, no footstep on the floor;
Enmeshed in golden peace, the hushed heart swoons. . . .
But draw the bow, once, gently—how the tunes,
Imprisoned in the wood deep days before,
Coax beauty out of quietude once more,
With love and laughter, twilight and soft moons.
Those wave-tops in the sunlight men call "souls,"
Whence comes it that they pattern on the mind
This music? How print they here, unworn,
Their star-dipped path, on whom an ocean rolls?
Faint as dark echoes from wild crags forlorn;
Poor drift of dreams trailing so far behind!

XXXII

It may be Beauty walks in widening rings
Forever, Love's first colloquy the stone;
Truth is, perchance, the ebb-tide of the unknown,
Laying old beaches bare of long-dead things;
But life roots deep, and twenty thousand springs
Suffice not for one garden fully grown:
Dry drift of leaves; the birds' oak overthrown;—
Next year the warbler in a new tree sings.
Earth holds to life, impenitent of time
Admitted—she a child then—once for all;
Dreaming past failure, up the precipice
Where, niche by niche, her seedlings lodge and climb;
Her splendid strivings strewing the abyss,
Exultant in the few that did not fall.

XXXIII

Youth first is April, mischievous, then
May,
From wink of dawn to waned-out after-
noon
Seated astride the earth, a singing tune
All twinkled full of starlight, a flushed
spray
Of precious peach-bloom opened in a day.
Come wind and rain, till all the walks are
strewn
With woful wreckage. Then, ah, then is
June;—
And life, unlatticed, runs once more away.
Despoiler of sweet petals, yet is pain
A foot-sure pilot leading by the hand
Love. Let the winds blow! Ever beauty
burns
To richer regions than youth's bubbling
vein!
Say it—still change is loss; the chilled
heart turns,
Still, from the sea, to one last glow of
land.

XXXIV

Beauty has other thoughts than place or time;
It is too winged for these clogged thoroughfares,—
Fades out too fleetingly for the slow airs
Which wakeful autumn stirs with, when the rime
Whitens the cheek of russet pantomime:
(Gone; come and gone; the midmost of pied players,
Its part gapes empty, almost unawares,
While the great actor's cloak is praised sublime.)
This earth is captive to the spacious dark,
Gyved to the gusty pathways on which turn
A myriad orbs evolving into night.
On other ends that beauty must embark
Which slantwise cuts the road in wavering flight,
A butterfly—bent whither? Who shall learn?

XXXV

Like singing in the sea-light, off the wane
Of afternoon (when, weathered mainsails wide,
The fishing fleet heads home, and overside
Are chanties of the wet, entangled seine
And shining catch in scuppers) is the pain
Of Beauty's passage, wistfully descried;—
The music of a dream-entinctured tide
On shadowy ships, and a far-held refrain.
Remembrance if there be of Beauty's face,—
A groping-back for blind, lost lineaments
The heart aches over, half regathering,
It trembles from no earthly hiding-place;
Some deep oblivion yields it, ring on ring,
Haunting horizons. . . . Whence? I know not whence.

XXXVI

Love keeps the day—broken to stars—all night.
There is such patience in it as prevails
Beyond cool hours of sleep and sable sails
To brimming basins of fresh morning light,
And wearies-out the drip of death's despite
Down world-old eaves. Love leans the scales
That little from the level which yet quails
The brow of Fate, the bronze and malachite.
Love waits, great dreamer, and with face in hands
Hears the faint moan of winds around the world,
The lap of waves, the pebbles brooks wash bare,
Heedful how slowly loose the swaddling bands
From that hid future hovering in air;—
Lily and leaf in one brown earth-bulb furled.

XXXVII

Happy is cock-crow, heard at break of sleep
In summer, lifting lids to the lulled room
And little stir of curtains. What perfume
Of flowers refreshed!—What drowsiness to keep!
(The reflex, floating seaward on the deep,
Flutters the sails and swings the languid boom;—
So memory lives.) What gladness out of gloom
To hear that clarion climb the starry steep!
There is no deep loss westward of the sun;
The pained farewells of pensive afternoon
Are not, at dawn: with childlike welcoming,
Looked for unanxiously, the dower is done
Of a whole world clipped in a golden ring.
Not even beauty fades, yet; but will soon.

XXXVIII

Many a morning, leaf-like, has been strewn,
Reluctantly, tiding a pleasant place;
Many a night has ravelled into lace,
Touched by the haunted fingers of the moon;
Another spring goes brook-down into June,
And then will summer, then will autumn trace
Their sweet, familiar by-paths: but her face
Beauty holds hidden in one afternoon.
(Life is so rare of level unisons,
And love remembers in its dreams.) Not eyes
It is, nor words, nor tremblings of the hand:
Only—a far light dims, a long wave runs,
And in the silence, after, through that land—
Wings overhead, and little-bird replies.

XXXIX

A swimmer in the sunrise, one wave's break
I grope beneath bewilderment. The surge
Wears thin: soon, soon, I shall emerge;—
The blurring drops from my blear eyelids shake;
Rise to the next wave; laugh, and be awake
To that immediate colour of the verge,
And golden call, whose dark, subaqueous urge
Troubles me, now, so deeply, for love's sake.
There is so much to seek!—so near behind
This film the truth is! Through this deep-sea trance
Beauty falls flickering, bewitched, unsure;
Life catches it, a sidling shell, pale, nacre-lined;
While on the dim sand-floor lies dreaming —pure
Love? Nay!—but broken light—love's variance.

XL

When this blind now shall be the golden past,
And blend with the warm haze on mellowing hills,—
When reverie, looking into bygones, fills
All the rude scars with gentler overcast,
I wonder, in that landscape, fading fast,
What tree, unnoted now, what common spills
Of meadow bloom, what mere red-robin trills,
Will be where Beauty hid—and hallowed, last?
Eyes that are sad once mingled for her sake
With tangled briars undertwined with fern,
Or followed over fences her dusk hair
Of dreams, and lost her. Swallow to a lake
Will Beauty, skimming, mirror down? and where?
Compelled by what bleak memory to return?

XLI

How strange it is!—how throbs that night
again;—
Thick coppice, fevered brook, hot, haunted
air,
A soul at challenge, God's dark every-
where.
Why is it happier with that dried pain
Than summer-longs of pleasure? Why re-
main,
Like flowers, the snowflakes of one morn-
ing's care—
Each step a sorrow—glowing now more
fair
Than all October's glories of ripe stain?
As one who, blinded, from the wars re-
turns;
Pursues old paths with cane-prods; clicks
the gate,
And, entering, goes groping through his
hall,
Heedless of portraits, prints and Chinese
urns,
To one hard chair—his boyhood's worst
of all;
So time, turned backward, chooses. Pain?
—now? Wait!

XLII

If it be true that flowers are very fair
For sweet allure and tinctured marriage fee
Of moon-white moth or brown, benignant bee
With pollen on his back, and have no care—
Despite a fragrance filling all the air—
For such vain shapes of shadowland as we,
Then in themselves they outreach artistry,
And loved by one, are lovely everywhere.
And we, warm human hearts, it may be, grow
Beyond a beauty visiting on eyes
For some desired endearing, to a power
A thought more perfect than our pulses know:
It may be in some slowly-opened hour,
Bleeding at heart, we perfume Paradise.

XLIII

Music there is, deeper than melody
Of meadow brooks or dusk-blown serenade
A creaking wagon comes on at up-grade
Against the sunset, from shy woods won free
By hidden hermit-thrushes; songs there be
Whose based accompaniment no strings have played,
Whose compass balks the seamost barricade,
Where all the land is sung by all the sea:
Beauty there is, beyond the glamorous foam
Of apple-buds new breaking, or the stir
A sudden star brings, rifting after rain,
All ringed with drops from leaves, the quiet home
Of water-lilies (Far it is and fain,
And sad for beauty's sake), called Character.

XLIV

He was too beautiful for them to know.
The face caught grief, the garments became mean;
Brown market dust and he trudged dawns between
And uttered drouth at nightfall; to and fro,
An uproar after him—he wrought out so.
Youth went away, down distant pastures green;
Joy died; friends perished; death must intervene.
He was too beautiful: they did not know.
Music twines wreaths for heart-aches that are dead;
From marble limbs immortal longings fall;
Still lifts Medea's outcry to her loss;
The Parthenon is still unravishèd.
That life-blood soaking into that rough cross
Outlives, and is the loveliest of all!

XLV

Who left his hilltop in a glow of sky
For the dim road, forgiving fate its frown,
Enhungered after disesteemed renown,
That artless poor man with the laughing eye,
Who preached his brother birds, and charmed so high,
He drew the proud marks of redemption down;—
The golden belfries of that sunset town
Are beautiful because his life passed by:
Because he, gayheart, dreamed in morning dew,
And said his prayers to flower-buds, or told
Sweet drowsy beads on stars looped overhead;
Loving, the whole while; loving . . . as have few.
Assisi ages; sunsets fade their gold;—
The world will never own Saint Francis dead.

XLVI

Because he loved the truth he died unspent,
Whose blade caught sky with every logic stroke,—
Whose laughter kindled tears, whose brave arch broke
The cracked, false roof-beam of a continent:
Wherever Lincoln looked a new earth went,
Hewn clean with kindness, built of common folk
Persuaded to be loving—so he spoke,
And so himself lived, simply, what he meant.
Here, forest clearings filled, there, railroads flung,
Still, thewed with dreams of her dear deathless dead,
She travails, she who was his proud desire,
Keeping his beauty with a guarded tongue.
Cold, do they say she is; unvoiced of fire;
No singer? She gave time a man instead.

XLVII

I know not if a better bloom there be
Than this rough earth gives, being trodden down
By wager of young feet in death's renown,
On shining fields of breathless bravery:
Unless it were some tight-lipped loyalty
Drudging its days out in a home-spun gown;
Tasting each drop of life's most bitter brown,
And humming all the while, heart-breakingly.
There is an answer, sworn to with the eyes,
For every hint of Beauty's querying.
Required, young loss?—a life is flung away;
Sorrow?—a heart is forfeit and hope dies
By inches; faith?—how beautiful are they
That round a wounded cause come rallying!

XLVIII

One star is lit, and a whole sea is burned:
There are no depths too deep for that
small shine
To shadow into; no such anodyne
Of darkness, patiently interned,
As drowns the hurt of loveliness discerned
And just not taken. Lips with lips com-
bine;
Hearts echo hearts—the lost is the di-
vine—
(How know they beauty, never having
learned?)
Vainly. Yet, wistful hands, not all in vain!
Outreached in starlight, something have
you; flung
To flowering sunset fields, no less a fire
Ruddies within you; searched with narrow
pain,
Not knowingly new altars you have hung:
Beauty is born of Beauty's own desire.

XLIX

Eternity walks with us, stride for stride,
Once in so rarely, bending down to see
Our broken gaze of fuddled infancy
Drowned in a buttercup, or walling wide
Upon two daisies: suddenly espied,
Goes out in wonderment and faëry
We catch the wild of, knowing it to be
Something remembered, half, and loved beside.
By this we learn our lineage; by this
Made proud, old doubts repudiate,
And henceforth move upon hereafters, given,
Like dreamers in their dreams, an artifice
Of slow awakening, that not yet shriven,
Has hold of life, and mocks dissolving fate.

L

Not in the pith and marrow of men's
bones;
Not in the blood, nor pencilled on the
brain;
A voice, yet not well heard; a dream, not
plain;
A music, intermingled with deaf tones;—
There is an urge that enters in and owns
Beyond the power of putting off again.
A calling in the night, a stir of pain,
Unrest and exile up wild mountain lones:
There is a fealty affirmed so far,
The adverse cunnings of a wintry sky
Adread it not; it is too stout for fate,
And is undaunted of men's eyes. They are
Brief, life; frail, flesh; not good are we,
nor great;—
Show us where Beauty went, for she
passed by!

LI

Hereafter. . . . Is it death to fall awake
Upon a darkness blown like sleeves behind?
Death, to knot loose this mummer's masque of mind,
And lave in naked truth as in a lake?
Childlike, submissive, sweet it were to take
The bedtime candle drowsily, and, blind,
Stumble up stairs, hugging a toy, to find
Love and Hereafter soft-eyed for one's sake.
There is a valley here; a rearguard goes
Through crimson cleft of crags in deepening shade.
Here there is tryst of battle brunt to bear,
While, peak to peak, a sobbing bugle blows
Beauty's betrayal. (Hewn and hacked-off blade,
They shall not pass!) Roland is riding there.

LII

Spring almost seems more beautiful than Spring,
This year. The swampy wood-track greenly goes
Against cross-currents of sharp white or rose;
Knee-deep the hillsides are; the orchards fling
Shadow and song and foam of blossoming.
Warmth of the tall sun; petals that unclose!—
Almost it seems that lightfoot Nature knows,
And weaves her love-dance in a dizzier ring.
But Spring this year is alien; her fire
Fumes into flames but has no heat to burn:
We are as onlookers at some strange rout,
Outlandish, under minaret and spire.
Unreal it is; we kneel not. Shut it out!—
Flare up, harsh frost, instead; stript fields, return!

LIII

Great winds are out: havoc is in the trees.
So be it. Snuff the stars; unslip the rain;
Let ruin run like blood. In vain, in vain!
Comes courage in its cockle-boat, and keys
Its pigmy voice above catastrophes,—
Singing immortally its old disdain
Of sudden death, enrapturing again
Doom's ramparts with a choir of Victories.
How beautiful that music is! How warm
It strikes the heart! It is like reaching hands
That grope beyond the stars, with faith to find.
Happiness? Nay, I know not. As the storm,
The singing gathers. Pain? He understands
Who drinks of it. There is a dream behind!

LIV

I had a dream, once—was it lives ago?
Beauty, the followed after, the first glint
that went
From charmed horizons of blue seas, was
pent
At last, a butterfly, and gazed on; so,
Proven but Love, the abashed yet leaning
low
From sky-tops in grave woods, or deeply
blent,
In apple-blooms, with that old merriment,
Sipped like a fragrance, dead worlds used
to know.
All is not loss: there is a dream behind,
Made pitiful by loving. Death and pain
Deter not, but are climbed upon; the hour
Breaks; the dream lives. It fades not; it
will find!
(I fling me prone before one startled
flower,
Breathless, and love's pursuit goes on
again.)

LV

A factory in the fields, whose windows
flare
Unearthly, once a sundown; a drab door
A blue-eyed barefoot sits and laughs be-
fore;
A whistle down the railroad, going
where?—
So dreams begin. It is not far, nor rare,
Yet tasting of it is to drink no more
Sleep, or soothed limbs, or drowsy man-
dragore:
But heartaches, and hurt fingers—these
are there.
The wind has need of us; the violets blow
One hillslope yonder—still the old en-
deavour!
Youth calls, and happiness is just ahead!
Who lives to it?—the lonely wanderers
know.
There is a beauty, after all is said—
And after all is sung—unreached forever.

JACK O' DREAMS *

(To Alfred Noyes)

On Brooklyn Bridge, at evening, coming
home against the moon,
From the city, where the toilers ebb and
flow;
In shadow that a tower cast,—
As light as though a flower passed,
I met him, but I knew him not, I knew him
not—so soon.
(I was from the city, then, and couldn't
know.)

Oh, nothing but a poor old man from sunny
Italy,—
From the land where the purple grape-
vines grow;
A bundle on his back he bore,
And bent as though his pack he
wore

* From the *Poetry Review,* May, 1916.

From childhood; but I knew him not, and
passed him carelessly.
(There was hurry in my eyes; I couldn't
know.)

But out beneath the moon once more was
nothing just the same,
There was witchcraft in the spillings of
that moon;
No longer, now, half dead with
care,
I walked the clouds with head in air
And feet that went, unwittingly, from tip
to tip of flame.
(There was witchcraft, and it caught me
very soon.)

The cables of the Bridge were strings,
upon a violin—
There were four of them and every one
in tune;
A wind that drew a cloud along
Made music that was loud and
strong;
It only needed dancers for the revels to
begin.
(There was music—oh, such music!—
and a moon.)

Then—down the walk and up the walk
and winding out and in,
On a tarantelle and carmagnole they
came;
With skip and leap and laugh and
shout,
A giddy, dizzy raff and rout,
They rode upon the heart-beats of that
roaring violin.
(There was thunder in the heart of it—
and flame.)

Grave citizens, immaculate, and toughs
from out of town,
And a dozen different specimens of
girl;—
Gay débutantes went hand in hand
With factory girls from candy land,
And subway guards cut capers round a
Wall Street magnate's frown.
(There were mighty strange companions
in that whirl.)

And, oh, the shine of happiness that lit
them as they danced!
It was more than moonlight over them
—that shine;

They gave it broadcast, each and all,
From one small newsboy's screech and call:
"Hey, mister!"—to a traffic-squad-policeman's horse, that pranced.
(There was every sort of culture in that line.)

To left, to right—they circled me, like Neptune's Nereid,
In a chain without a single broken link;
And all the lights around the rim
Began to dip and bound and swim,—
The Woolworth Tower winked at me, upon my soul, it did!
(There was very solemn laughter in that wink.)

Then, all at once, the moon was quenched in flying, frosty cloud,—
Just a moment, but it snapped the dizzy spell;
The music changed to creaking heels,
To tugboat toots, to shrieking wheels,

And died beneath a trolley car that hauled
a huddled crowd.
(There was slaughter in the beating of
that bell.)

The dancers vanished, utterly, like witch-
flame in a mire,
Leaving weary, white-faced toilers in
their stead.
Once more the city flowed away
Adown a cobbled road of grey,
Its workshop lights behind it like a palis-
ade of fire.
(There was home, a spark of happiness,
ahead.)

Oh, nothing but a poor old man from sun-
ny Italy,—
From the land where the purple grape-
vines grow. . . .
It may be—but his pack, it
seems,
Held somewhat more, and Jack
o' Dreams
Is what I call him. Were they dreams, or
were they prophecy?
(There were strange things in that
pack, is all I know.)

UNDERGROUND *

Life prods us here so fast, so herded we,
Men become moles and travel underground.
It isn't pleasant: not just gay and free,
But now and then, for all its obloquy,
Sight comes to deeper depths down there, I've found.

Take this, for instance; not so long ago:
A little after flood, the tide still ran
Full current of that human undertow,
I wedged in with the rest, and to and fro,
Took turns in breathing from a painted fan.

Scant room enough—a picture-puzzle space
I fitted in precisely; on one side
A sulky Falstaff, grunting his disgrace,
On the other, a shop-girl with hat-hidden face,
Reading a paper opened very wide.

* From the *Poetry Review,* November, 1916.

Her hand, stretched out across my down-
ward gaze,
Unconsciously, to read, was mine for clue
Of all her cloudy years and priceless days.
She read the paper, I, the hidden ways
Of nature, groping, blindly, to come
through.

A not too comely hand, red, rough and
soiled;
Nails not just clean, nor shapely; knuckles
those
Of one who takes hard knocks; a hand that
toiled
From childhood, and was wept on—not a
spoiled;
White heroine of leisure; not a rose.

But kept its holiness through all, that told,
Somehow, of what a woman's heart, deep
down
Makes mention of, in maiden wisdom
stoled;—
Of mother-hunger reaching out to hold
A little child, for love to own, and crown.

Was it the roundness, wedding thumb and wrist;
The plump, full curve, completing the whole hand?
Partly, I think, and something more, I missed—
Too subtle to be gleaned—some moonlight-kissed,
Faint, guarded goodness out of fairyland.

Some dignity appealing for desire,
Too rare for fleshly heart to write upon;
Some star-tipped, icy pinnacle of fire,
The sunrise points, and mariners admire,—
Some nook of heaven no sooner seen than gone.

A woman's weakness in that hand combined
With what the world were lost for wanting of:
Youth hardly yielded it for years to find.
Down in those depths lay dreaming, half divined,
That glory to light seas—a woman's love.

And all this while, I have remembered her,
And wondered . . . by her cog-wheel
world caught in,
Poor and unmarried, would ripe nature
stir,
Or being balked, succumb to character
And wreak slow vengeance where it could
not win.

A riddle, this, I have no thought to read,
Only to bring to light; just to propound
Once, and leave off: there may be who will
heed.
This much I take for truth, not faith or
creed,—
Goodness is better down there—under-
ground.

A YOUNG GIRL LAUGHS

Two squares of grass, four clothes-poles
and a tree;
The city side-walk one brick wall away;
A guarded hint of golden, dying day;
And dreams? Not yet. The pansies set
me free.

Fragrant, clean pansies, musked of good,
brown loam,
With furry cheeks of butterflies, and look
Of rustic comeliness, its hearth forsook
On market day, a pleasant jaunt from
home.

Pansies with upturned faces, and far eyes
Expectant for some pageant long de-
layed;—
A pushing populace by rumour swayed
Of forward bugles fringing eagled skies.

Bugles of breezes making dark leaves stir
And shadows quicken, down long thor-
oughfares,—

A Young Girl Laughs

With laughter laden, and cool ocean airs,
And flapping sails the twilight tints to her.

Pansies? Nay!—but dancers glamorous,
In frisky whirl-around and lissome sway;
Startle and stoop and down the wind away;
Then back once more, the plucked strings
clamorous. . . .

Stale city night, descending lonelily;
A girl's light laugh one blind brick wall
away.
A blotted bed of pansies—what are they?
Two squares of grass, four clothes-poles
and a tree.

A YOUNG GIRL SINGS

Weakness, perhaps. The anæsthetic fumes
Die hard; and nausea dilutes courage more,
Even, than pain—the little creeping pain
That flickers here and there like northern lights
Haunting pale polar stars. (Each new nerve cries.)
It was, most likely, weakness.

First there came
Misgivings, ugly ones, the kind that blow
A cold sea-fog on confidence; then fears,
As when an army wavers; then, slow wings
Dark-clustering on trees; the carcass—doubt.
Memory disgorged, but, dog-like, took again
The pallet-bed on wheels; the staff in white;
The rubber cap to draw from; last, the fumes.

Always, for sequel, furious revolt,
That consciousness, the gallant blaze of things,
The lighted loveliness containing all,—
History, beauty, childhood, love of friends,
The war in Europe, home, the noisy street,—
Should dwindle, and they with it, all the world,
For one thumb-pinch of vapour, to a spark
Etching an aimless pattern on blank walls;—
Spent fire in chimney-soot. Was life so small?
Was death? . . . This argued it. (So gangrened doubt.)

Came then an evening, full of sunset sky,
That burned the brownstone cornices to gold,
And tugged the sick-room curtains like a sail;
Till life just breathed again. But listlessly,
And leaden. Doubt still sank it. Then—oh, then—
A voice, through open windows; a young girl's,

A Young Girl Sings

High singing. Very soft, at first, and sweet,—
Cool rill-notes before dawn and after rain,—
But brimming, soon, and flooding fuller, soon,
And breaking banks and overflowing, till
It seemed, the room, the street, the city, aye,
The very sunset, were caught up in song
And thrilled it through and through like one great chord
Triumphing.

So a wave, up-wandering
From drifted slopes beyond the ocean's rim,
Filling its lap with stars, might heave the dawn,
At last, with happy shoulders, on the land.
And so might rumour come, of battle turn,
At dusty noon adown a village street
Deserted, dreading news: now pieced-out words,
Incredible, through chinks in blinds, and now
A populace at doorways, looking out,

With tears and laughter for their dear land saved,
On tattered flags, and cannon choked with grime,
And faces—friendly faces!—bringing home
Victory.

Strange that God should come back so,
And youth, and hope, and clinging happiness;—
Just for a voice, a girl's voice. But, you see,
It wasn't just a voice. Birds sing, and souls. . . .
Life isn't small. And death? There is no death.

CERTAINLY IN THAT MUSIC

You loved that melody; your eyes and hair
Leaned at its brink, your fingers dipped its tide;
There is remembrance in it, sanctified,
Of how you laughed and caught our hands: the player
Haply perceives you not, but you are there,
Forever, joyful, kneeling at its side
With echoes of young daffodils, that died
Just months agone and rhyme you everywhere.
You are a part of all wild, lovely things,
Brooks, lights, clouds, birdsongs, April ecstasies,—
All perishable youth that wears not old;
But most of all, you are in muted strings
Dreaming enchantment through a field of gold,
Forthright, gay, eager . . . kissed and then gone, Louise!

MARCH EIGHTEENTH

The wastrel earth is down in dreams;
A warmth is nooked beneath the hill;
A blackbird pipes, a wind falls still;—
What waits it? What is lost?—or seems?

Laughter is lost, and a gay hand;
Feet are awaited, sudden feet
That frolicked. Life was oh, so sweet . . .
It is hard to understand.

There is a twilight where the day
Remembers earth, not glad to go,
Yet joys on into lovelier glow
Beyond the stars. Went she that way?

Certainly sings her vivid tread
Around some blinded corner, now:
I hear it, though I know not how.
Spring hears. She is not, is not—dead!

TO THE VERY TENDER CRESCENT MOON

Precious in incompleteness,—
Of such surpassing sweetness
As dreams are drawn upon!
A baby's sigh;
A white moth's thigh;
The lift of lids that flutter
On love too faint to utter;
Slim maiden, soon
Made wife, slim moon,
In your exceeding fleetness
All youth is summed and gone.

THE SOCIABILITY OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Thought gives it rarely. It must happen so.
The perfect hour blooms up unheralded.
Perpend. "Let's take our books with us, and go
Out to the cabin for a quiet read!" she said.
In lazy mood
I took my tome and followed after.
(The back way for adventure.) Soon
Across the warm, gold afternoon,
She led me, with light feet and laughter,
Into a wood.
A sabbath journey only, through the pines.
One cleft of sunlight caught it; good bark brown,
With easy roof and unassuming lines;
Door open; a play cabin. We sat down.

There was, I think, some virtue in the clothes we wore:
She, a stout skirt and simple sailor blouse,
No hat, and sneakers; I,

The Sociability of the Subconscious

Old flannels, outlawed many years before,
A tennis shirt and shoes. (Comfort allows
The mood care's quirks deny.)
We squandered little time on speech:
Each took a corner of the window; guided
Plump pillows to best use, and then subsided
Into a swoon of silence, each.

Books held the foreground. Books were of that hour
Pre-eminent, we thought.
(In winter's footprints April hides her flower.)
We read; while fortune wrought,
Not romance, but a rarer thing, diviner.
I read John Milton; she, an Olive Schreiner.
Books held the foreground. Half-sensed, all the while,
Were soft intrusions, seas,
Far-heard when winds touch trees;
Sweet, distant laughter dwindled to a smile;
The *Peter Piper* of a motor-boat,
Throbbing beneath bright voices, then

A pool of silence, stirred again
By seagulls in falsetto, a harsh note.
But mostly—peace. One almost felt the sun
A-westering, while one small bee
Droned all the world indulgence, in his run
Round one small room: so still were we.
And all the while, I was aware of her;
Reading anew
L'Allegro, Penseroso, Lycidas,
The *Cyriack,* and the *Blindness.* Ghostlier
As, eyes drawn down, I watched the old friends pass,
That still room grew.

I was aware of her in a new way.
Milton absorbed me. I remember well
The joy of winging that proud upper air,
And, once, how *scrannel* keyed the seagulls. (They
Still own it.) Whence it came I cannot tell,
But we waked, somehow, and—I was aware.

An inroad ended it:
A megaphone

Called: "We are starting!" Books closed,
out we ran,
The world of common-sense resumed. No
plan.
Neither intended it.
The hour unknown.
But something wrought with us. I was
aware. . . .
We waked in some eternity, it seems,
Brains are but barriers of, with their poor
dreams.
Who runs may read; only—such hours are
rare.

A FIRE OF LEAVES

The hills heaped up, the road dipped
down;
Red Autumn, rallying in the trees,
Still broke the sunset's boundaries,
While in deep shadow dimmed the town.

A struggling hamlet, hiding there
Between the exuberant hills, it lay
Along our homeward-wending way,
Humble, appealing, like a prayer.

With grey, worn roof, and moss-grown
eaves,
One house there was that most beguiled;
A candle from its window smiled,
Before it burned a fire of leaves.

A cottager of by-gone days
Stood, ruddy-faced, and watched us pass;
Two children raked the leaf-strewn grass
And emptied armfuls on the blaze.

A Fire of Leaves

The fragrant smoke went sailing far
Beyond the mouldering apple trees;
We traced it, till a whiff of breeze
Caught it, and pierced it with a star.

What was there in that poor abode,
That window and that wayside fire,
That we, so fain of Heart's Desire,
Should find it there, beside the road?

Some touch of old, long-buried things;
Some taste of simple, early lore:
We stood as others stood before,
And fledged our souls with earth-brown
wings.

ONCE

All in and out the leaves the rain,
All in and out the fields the train;
At length the city, and the sun
Hands raised in benediction.

A hill with lamps against the sky,
The pavements of it not yet dry;
Two rows of trees that wept, like rain,
Dark patterns in the sunset stain.

A wink, a glimpse, and then the train
Put beauty at its back again;
But ever since that moment I
Have loved that hill-top in the sky.

I know full well its trees still hold
Their patterns in the sunset gold;
Its lamps against the crimson stain,
I know, like wistful stars remain.

And I am very fond and fain
To meet that little hill again;—
And we shall meet, I know, once more;
As somewhere . . . somewhere . . . long
before.

IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED SO

I sent you my dreams—wrote them down
In my room, after dark, when had died
The wind in the oak leaves outside,
And the clocks striking in the town.

I sent you my dreams, as they came,
Full of wings, from the dark overhead;
In their starlight of beauty and dread;
In their pallor, unearthly, of flame.

And you sent me back—not a word;
No folded white wings to unclose:
The heart of a pressed wild rose
Was the single sign you had heard.

It was strange you should take that rose
To tell me you knew, and heard;
It was more than a wingéd word;
It was my own youth that you chose.

It was my own youth that I held
In the deep of my hollowed hand;
It was breath from a far-away land,
That I caught to my lips, and smelled.

It Might Have Happened So

It was candles and cake, on a June,
Long ago, and a mother's smile;
It was wind from the sea, the while
The harbor made mist of the moon.

It was dream bubbles bright, that broke
On the beach, where the ripples cried;
It was boyhood that whistled to hide
The heart of a man, that awoke.

This, all this, in the rose you sent;
But it wasn't to touch my lips to this
That I caught up your rose—not this to
kiss—
But, as coming from you, what it meant!

MOODS

Gold, over the hilltop thrown, gold, like
a flaming sea;
Silver, a silvery sickle, a moon a-glinting
frostily:
Breath in the air, to clouds, to skies,
To winds that cease to blow;
Branches, bare branches, with twigs put-
ting hands over eyes,
Heaven let loose with high singing—let
loose in the West, where it dies;—
Silence below.

I, with my window flung wide to the top of
the frame,
Motionless, pierced, lifted up in worship,
just breathe your name,
Love; and let beauty hold to you,—
A maiden moon that are:
I, with raised head to dark branches, with
moonlight stabbed through,
Thirst, in my soul thirst, and fainting to
drink of your heavenly dew,
Sip of a star.

Candlelight, candles and quiet, a kettle
purring low;
Silver, a silvery kettle, a-gleam against a
cloth of snow:
Fragrance in air, sweet clouds that bring
Good kitchen comforts near;
Appetite keen, but contented with present
promising;
House warmth and heart warmth a-plenty,
provision to spare; not a thing
Irksome to fear.

I, all alone at the table, having drawn my
chair in,
Breaking bread at my ease, with my napkin
tucked comfortably under my chin,
Ruminate so, on pleasant strains
The quiet weaves for me.
I with bent head to my teacup, touch golden
refrains,—
Memories, soft, of your voice; and dream-
ing down long sunset lanes,
Sip of my tea.

ON THE DEATH OF AN OBSCURE MUSICIAN

Never more, now, at the rouse of tides returning
Up blind creeks from the sea;
Never, ah, never, now, when the dawn breaks, burning,
Will thy wings be set free.

Sorrowfully quenched, like a sail on the dim horizon
In a gust of dark rain;
Lo, thou art gone, and the sun-gold that crowned thee, dies on
Thy proud ocean again.

Wintrily, soon will the wind scourge the dry sedges,
And a pitiless moon
Bare the salt marshes' bleak, impoverished edges,
And the ice thicken soon.

On the Death of an Obscure Musician

Brief is the arch of our years, a rainbow given
By a rift of warm sky;
Dreamed, we dissolve like a cloud in the blue of heaven:
So we come, so we die.

So—there is naught of thee; here where the ocean
Is awake round thy heart.
Silence is here; and the tide, with its dog-like devotion. . . .
Is there song where thou art?

Song where thou art? In the West, now, the clouds are withholden,
And the rain is put by:
Over the mountains grim is a mantle golden;
All hot flame is the sky.

Just as thy head drooped a glory—cloud-drift broken
By strong sun—touched the sea;
Wonderfully pointing the way, the sailor's token.
It was thine, and for thee!

On the Death of an Obscure Musician

Inland, but inland is peace, and a wildflower fragrance
New distilled by the rain;
Inland are joy and rest, and seaward—a vagrance
Of long-wandering pain.

Thou hast gone out on the sea to perilous places;—
Uncompanioned must fly
Westward with winds and white stars, on the sunset's traces,
Into empty, blown sky.

So it was ever with singers; dead of sorrow
Just a heart's throb too strong.
Thou hast gone out on the sea: to the world's to-morrow,
Wave on wave, comes thy song.

THE GARDEN OF OPPORTUNITY

(After Maxfield Parrish)

Oh, tarry you here, while friends' feet
go,—
One little whisper while;
Nay, but an hour of dalliance,
With me my voice and you your glance!—
It isn't likely flowers there blow
Would fade while you could smile.

Full many pleasant folk there be
Who hurry here and there;
Much pother is of wealth and fame:
None is the richer, none has name
So sweet as one another's we
Breathe on this quiet air.

Here's fancy; at our back's a lake,
(Don't turn around!) all blue;
Behind it, mountains, graven grim,
Thrust like the roots of heaven. Here's
whim:

The Garden of Opportunity

Let's choose we dream, and dreaming, wake
To find the dream come true.

We'll dream that Time has no barbed power
On lovers' long delight,
But is of heart-beats only, slips
Only by way of pause, from lips;
That gift of eyes o'erleaps the hour,
And souls pass death to plight.

We'll dream that Beauty dreads no more
Our unfamiliar hand;
That tamed—fay bird—she gentles, now,
The moonlight on her starry bough
With music, strangering ashore
The flutes of fairyland.

We'll dream the flower whose bud is furled,
The tight-lipped, the yet blind,
(That wildflower, seeded in wild sod,
It grows, it grows, it grows to God!)
Has overrun this flinted world
With warmth of being kind.

The Garden of Opportunity

We'll dream the glory burns again
    Of visible great wings
Above the Siege called Perilous;
That Christ once more is God-with-us,
Known, and this ice of doubt and pain
    Melts into bubbling springs.

We'll dream beside that lake of blue,
    Beneath those Alps of stone,
That life is more than goods or gold;
That troth is trustful, love will hold;
That joyance sparkles derring-do,
    And faith is a bugle blown.

It needs not long; do I fret youth,
    Sweet, with my dreamer's plea?
One droop of fingers, lift of eyes,
Releases you. Nay!—but time flies?
The blue lake's name is Love of Truth,
    The mountains', Loyalty.

FEBRUARY

I know the very place, if you please:
A hill, with a long incline,
Is given to mount, through murmuring trees,
Where, whether of winds or whether of seas,
Are voices that wander, and symphonies,
Down soft-footed paths of pine.

The hill-top gained, there is level ground
To cross, and a garden gate
With a latch to lift, and a wall around,
And flower-buds bending by mete and bound
And prim little walks, and beyond—a sound
Of shallowing waves; but wait—

Be patient; not yet—a few steps more:
Now turn to the right with me;
A knoll to climb to a gnarled, low door

In the wood, with a rough stone bench before;—
Now look!—the sudden cliffs, and the floor
Of the far-outspreading sea!

Bright islands, broad patches of hurrying shade
And reaches of level shine;
Blue of the peacock and gold of the blade;
Pride of the warrior, sweet of the maid,
Mingled forever: the sea does not fade;
Only your day-dreams, and mine.

This window that gives on rows and rows
Of others, this dreary view
At drab back-yards and ancient snows;
This grind which the eternal street-car goes;—
We have it too much; but I suppose—
What matter, when you are you!

OCTOBER

Not with dreams to you,
Dearest, I come: old ways relinquishing,
Basket on arm no longer now I strew
The merry buds of simple-minded spring;
But up the forest aisles, with long haloo,
Red-wreathed garlands bring.

Now no more to roam,
Idly, the fields of dalliance, I turn
Unto bold cliffs capped cloudily with foam,
Or hills of spruce where sudden maples burn;
Then, all in sunset bathed, the lights of home
Down through trees discern.

Frosted in the sun,—
Faded and frosted now the meadows are;
Misty with morning all the hillsides run
To silent distances—to pale peaks, far
Across rich plains, with goldenrod all spun,—
Blue with the aster star.

October

Good it were to go,
Hercules-like, with club and lion-skin,
Stoutly, on such a morn, to overthrow
Antagonists supernal, so to win,
From sea to sea, a swath through all earth's woe,
Letting laughter in.

Still—this daylight dies
Early, and, dearest, sweeter now it seems,
Gayer and sweeter, when the north wind cries,
With solid, city walls and lamplight gleams.
The task once more!—no backward looks or sighs!
Life I sing, not dreams!

GRACE COURT, BROOKLYN HEIGHTS

Turned eight o'clock; the street lights
throw,
Exactly as in long ago,
Deep garden glooms, and traceries
From out of overhanging trees.
Two stars—the Twins—against a sky
Of April violets, fading, lie
Just as they used to do; the bay
Utters old voices, far away,
And in the church across the stones
An organ grumbles undertones
To little piping trebles, where
A choir recites for Sunday prayer.
The play, the scene are both the same;
The plot—too far advanced—I blame
For something sad in all around,
Deeper than outward change would
sound.

The brook of boyhood runs away,
An eager freshet, in a day.
Oh, spring and night!—to feel again

That after-supper high disdain;—
That rush of wings, while daylight dies,
For one more romp; that paradise
Of being hatless, bouncing ball,
With sweet spring twilight over all,
And one late hurdy-gurdy, bent
On bubbling out its merriment.
Oh, bliss!—to have once more at hand
A predatory German band,
With bleating bass and martial blare,
And no horizon anywhere
But happiness of little boys
Imbibing deep of big brass noise.
A few days older, not much more,
And proud romance is at the door,
With flying hair, and floating laughter
For home-from-school to follow after.

How prone fond memory is to praise
That happiest of holidays,
When boys and girls would blithe embark,
On bicycles, for Prospect Park.
How fresh returns that early green
Of shaven lawns; that feathered sheen
Of shrubs and shoots; how good the sun,
And youth, how lightly worn—and won!

I never hear the slimmest rhymes
That marched to music in those times,
Without a stab of sudden pain,
To shut my eyes and be again,
Almost, and yet just not be, young
As when those songs were being sung.
I never hear *The Geisha* played,
Or *Sousa* or *The Serenade,*
But, radiant, out of memory burst
The joyful times I heard them first.
What heart-beats in those airs remain;—
Absurd old measures tripped in twain!
How golden, in the vagrant West,
Like billowing clouds, those first and best
And sweetest dances gleam and glow
Above the hills of long ago!
How bright with sails, their sea all smiles,
They voyage for the happy isles!
Those times!—when each ingredient soul
Was stirred, as in a spirituous bowl,
Into one glorious flame, that ended
Only because the sun ascended;
And long, long after, blessed, like prayer,
The bloom of hearts upbreathing there.
Those times!—who once did dance them
through
Will not forget. (Will you? Will you?)

Grace Court, Brooklyn Heights

To-night the lilac bushes are
An incense to the evening star;
And little wafts of fragrance rise
To where the tree-tops brush the skies.
A soft wind down the twilight stair
Tip-toes, and stirs the willow's hair:
The poplar leaves, like ghosts in grey,
Flutter frail things no tongue could say;
And over all the gardens gleams
The pallor of departed dreams.

ROMANTICISM

(To John Masefield)

Cold gold eagle of the Roman legionaries,
Seated on a standard while the war roared round;
With a look of antique, travel-worn survival,—
Up above the battle and the tramped red ground.

Cold gold eagle, in the city, on a flag-pole,
Perched upon a weather-vane and turned to and fro;
With an air of stiff-necked, studied-out aloofness,—
Bearing no allegiance to the life down below.

Cold gold eagle on a twenty-dollar gold-piece,
Spreading out its feathers, full of puffed-up pride;

With a grin of lofty, gratified contentment,—
Devil take the hindmost—and a sleeked inside.

Hot live eagle on a foray from his eyry,
Swooping down a precipice on wings tight-drawn;
With a glare of eager, vivid, fierce defiance,—
Skirling out his hunger to the brisk bright dawn.

REQUIESCAT *

(April 23rd, 1916)

"That marble bust marks Shakespeare's
bones;
A perfect likeness"—Cook's guide drones.
"He wrote those words: they're poetry.
That's all. There's nothing else to see."
Twittering birds in the trees outside;
Peace in the church: gone crowd and
guide:
Peace in the church: the afternoon
Wanes long; the creaking verger soon
Comes with his keys. One night the more
Will close above this chancel floor,
And largest chink let in no gleams.
What meant he by his Hamlet's
"dreams"?—
His Lear and old man's madness? Came
Horror, at last, to tinge the flame
Prometheus plucked from heaven; and
he?—

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* *Boston Evening Transcript,* April 22, 1916.

Looked he too deep? Such things can be.
Our gain is purchased so. 'Twere best,
Just as he asked, to let him rest.
Centuries under, ceiled with stones,—
That marble bust marks Shakespeare's bones?
The very mention, lark-like goes
Sky-clambering in clearest rose,
And thicket copses, one by one,
Wake, answering, and bugles run
From green, enchanted glade to glade;
Courtiers, huntsmen cavalcade;
Battles are brewed; brave loves beat high;
Adventure quickens, hounds give cry;—
Youth, youth is up; the world is young,
And life, rich life, is still unsung.
Shakespeare!—warm sunlight breaks in twain
Death; and the violets bloom again.

THESE UNITED STATES *

(To Alan Seeger)

I

New, for the most part; very, very new.
Flimsy houses, mostly turned askew;
Streets that straggle, where, not long ago,
Timber stood, then cows grazed, now papers blow.
Much too busy to be tidy, bent
On being bigger—one big circus tent.
Somewhat slangy; not devoid of cheek;
Loving noise, and loving best to speak.
Swayed by headlines; governed by a shout;—
Nine days of wonder, then a new one's out.
Bashful in nothing; reverent in few;
New, for the most part; very, very new.
But—beneath the newness, in behind
All the brag and splurge and jest, we find
This: Old memories of homespun days,
Candle-lit; of quiet, sabbath ways

*From *Boston Evening Transcript*, Feb. 7, 1917.

Won from wildernesses, fervent prayer
Given in peril's proof; young feet worn bare,
Hands tough-trained, and level-looking eyes
Keen on gunsights, calm as evening skies;
Memories of battle, richly drowned
In warm life-blood, heroes-wrapped-around,—
Deep, too deep for tears, not spoken of
Save by that great love which answers love;
Memories of old songs, carried far
Over wide prairies, past peaks that are
Torches to the sunrise, past the spires,
Star-outlined, of trees; by rain-ringed fires
Gleaned, and sung again on wind-bleached foam
With brave ships for China, praising home,
Proudly, to strange skies; most sweet, most fair
Songs, the old, old same songs, everywhere.
Memories and going deeper—dreams.
Dreams brought over seas, the first faint gleams;

Cherished, through storm cherished; dim
and pale
But not dying dreams; still held, still hale,
Still with haughty stars defended, still,
Aloof, like eagles, brooding their bright
will.

II

New, for the most part; very, very new.
Anglo-Saxon, German, Celt and Jew,
Latin, Armenian, Negro, Slav, Chinese,
Scandinavian, Hindoo, Dutch—all these.
Foreign tongues, not light to extirpate;
Feuds, hard-dying, Old-World, out of date.
Huddled herds in cities; labour, lined,
Often, with backward looks; love, left be-
hind.
Seed wild-sown the wind has foisted far;
Rude wave-welter of all creeds that are.
Gallant the ship; a motley crowd the
crew;—
New for the most part, very, very new.
But—beneath the newness, in behind
All the warp and tug and strain, we find
This: Old hungerings of long-dead days
Spirit-bowed; of cruel, down-trod ways
Sore with subjugation; backs that meant

Overseers' whip-lashes, the bent,
Yoked abasement of once noble wills
Lunging at thongs between their masters'
thills,—
Beasts of burden being; hungerings
Germinate in darkness, gouged by kings,
Bruised by heels of armies, overborne,
Time on time, by conquest, despot-torn;
Living, yet, miraculous alive;
Daunted not, continuing to thrive
Towards the sunlight; hungerings to be
Shackles through, and sea-glad, and got
free;—
Hungerings for open spaces, wide
Of horizon, reaching out; to stride
Fields not fenced a summer's day, and be
Happy at moonrise; to get free . . . free.
Hungerings, and going deeper—fires.
Fires brought over seas, immense desires,
Smouldering, subterranean; smothered,
dim
But not dying fires; still lodged, still grim,
Still with stubborn griefs defended, still
Anchored like iron rock-deep in proud will.

III

Dreams. Fires. Fraught clouds from Europe blow,
Whose rampired walls full sulphurously glow
With battle-flare at sunrise; overseas
Breaks the beached foam of wasting panoplies,
And faintly, as in sea-shells, far away,
The cannon thunder whispers night and day.
Fires. Dreams. In factory belch fuliginous,
In caisson gloom and skyey balanced truss;
By cobweb rails to fabled Ophirs spun;
On lapping tides; down darkened streets, is done—
Gestation of a giant doomed to birth—
The forging of a new and mightier earth.
A mightier. And a better? Not by ease—
By shoulder shrugs and oiled immunities.
Not by midnight riot. Once again
They shall inherit most who most live plain.
Ay, fear it not, the little breed that knows
Nothing but wantonness, it goes—it goes.

A bolder blood shall stride into the part;
Shall take the stage; shall wield a manlier art,
And put a shame on mimic. Even now
Is troubled in his sleep the Sleeper's brow.
Unrest, like mist, grows ghostlier. It seems
The Thinker questions. . . . Travail. Fire and dreams.
Dark overhead the clouds of Europe blow,
Heat-lightning-lit, dull, ominous and low.
Not yet, not yet the hour, but, tryst to keep,
A spirit moves abroad upon the deep,
And will be stirring soon. And will be sung,
Soon, to a clarion of nobler tongue
Than inks on ticker-tapes or glibly reads
From pompous records of parochial greeds
Promulgate for the People. . . . Midnight blue.
Stars of these States a-shining through,
The dawn awaited. Dreaming, peaks and spires;—
The house still locked and dreaming. Dreams—and fires.

IV

Thou whose full time both buds and stars
await;—
On the curved cup of destiny whose hold
Permits no bubble world its concave gold
Too buoyant to relinquish; at whose gate
Love takes her lantern and goes out to
Hate,
Bending above the battle's bleeding mould;
Our country thou in fire and dreams en-
fold—
In forest freshness, her, thy consecrate.
There must be some strange beauty hid in
her,
With withes uncut by sharp awakening
sword;
Some precious gift not veined, some truth
of power
Thou art maturing, great artificer.
Fools we, and blind; impatient of an hour;
But make her worthy, for we love her,
Lord!

THE SOLDIER TO HIS COUNTRYMEN *

A year ago to-day
I hitched the team up and took milk to town.
A grumbler I was; people used to say
They knew my wagon by the driver's frown.
I growled at mud and swore when rain shut down,
A year ago to-day.

This very afternoon
We did five miles of mire and then dug in,—
Machine-gun practice, blanks, but the same tune;
Came hiking home we did, then; one wide grin
Because our captain praised us some. Our skin
Has toughened; we'll sing, soon.

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* From *Boston Evening Transcript,* March 27, 1918.

The Soldier to His Countrymen

I don't just understand.
The way of it, but somehow all this drill
And marching, all this mud and sand
Rubs off the edges of our souls, until
What one man wouldn't do, we rookies, will—
Gladly, you understand.

We like each other, too,
Better and better. Isn't much untried
About the men you tent with; through and through
We scorch each other; learning the inside,
The thick and thin of each raw human hide:—
The best comes deep in you.

We'll need our best, they say,
When we get over. Sometimes, we hear said,
Waist-deep it is in water, hell to pay
On top of you, and neither food nor bed
For days. And sometimes men drop dead
Without one sound, they say.

At school we used to know
Wars and the dates of battles; Paul Revere
And Bunker Hill and Gettysburg—a row

Of them, we studied. Things in books are
queer:
When Lee fought Grant, it wasn't real or
near.
This one is different, though.

This one is going now.
Why, on our hike to-day we passed a farm,
Chickens, a pig-pen, horses, an old cow.
All acting just as usual. No harm.
Only they ought to show some faint
alarm,—
I felt they ought somehow.

About this time at home
Will be some crocuses, or buds, maybe,
Of maples, and the smell of good black
loam
In ploughing time. And sunsets? I can
see
The clouds now, back of our old apple tree,
About this time, at home.

Supper was early then,
And afterwards we boys went out to play
Till dark. We never dreamed as grown-
up men

We should be here some springtime, far
away,
Swabbing a rifle out at end of day.
We were too careless then.

I liked October best;
White frost on fields; thick yellow stacks
of grain,
And early nights for mischief. Old Green
guessed
Who stole his pumpkins, when we ran the
lane
With jack-o'-lanterns for his window-pane.
At least—he hid the rest.

Trench-raiding is like that;—
With bombs for pumpkins. Over there in
France
They say the trees are all shot dead. So
flat
It is, they say, you see one broad expanse
Of smoking ruins. Like home? Not a
chance
It will be. Not like that—

Look! all around you, wide,
The sweetest country; scattered every-
where
As far as you can see, real homes. Inside

Are supper tables. Children undress there
And go to bed in safety. No red glare;
Cool, quiet, far and wide.

I like to close my eyes
And think of it: a continent unrolled—
All sorts of cities; endless railroad ties,
Bridges and mountain tunnels. Sunlight gold,
At last, upon the sea. Loyal? The hold
Of the same love replies.

It swells the heart of you;
'Way out in California are men
Escorting that same flag; in Texas, too,
All getting ready. Watch Montana, when
Her boys go in with it: and William Penn
Cheering Virginia through.

I tell you, folks, today
This country is magnificent. You know
How big it is, how busy; quite a way
From Serbia, that upset Europe so,
And yet, when once roused, granted it was slow—
Just look at it today.

The Soldier to His Countrymen

We needed this to learn
How strong we were. Each one of us the same:
I never dreamed to do so much. His turn
Shakes each man's shoulders. Give us praise or blame.
We chose to fight. Now watch us. One great flame
The road is. Let it burn!

I never knew before;
God put this nation here for something high;
Higher than we can see the top of. War,
If we stick true, won't wreck it. It might die
Of comfort. This will save it. Happy? I?
I never lived before.

A PINE BOX—AND THE FLAG*

That tree once touched the stars. The flame
Went down it of the dawn;
Brave, whistling airs awoke it. Came
Death to the heart of it, straight-aim . . .
The steel could be withdrawn.

That way is best: the naked thing
In its own dignity.
Sweet wood, to which wood odours cling
Still, and what a proud covering
For fallen man and tree.

Proud flag!—how meekly it is prone
On that residual breast!
Asks not his name—nor was he known
Widely—just loves him; that alone,
Putting aside the rest.

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*From *The Boston Evening Transcript,* October 26, 1918.

New wishes in those stars; new prayers
Said in those precious veins:
New trees, new dawns, new boisterous airs;
But no new flag!—'tis theirs, 'tis theirs!—
Their blood in it remains.

THE HOUSING OF THE BANNERS

(To Joyce Kilmer)

I had a vision: Near an open sky,
In aisles of trees,
With windy songs and rustling tread, went by
Dark panoplies.
They might have been the music of night air,
Or shadows of the stars; no bugle blare,
No shattering shot; I looked—and they were there,
Cadenced like seas.

They moved one way, as clouds move when the moon
Is being drowned;
They drew along a singing, but the tune
Was less than sound:
And every marcher came as he was gone,
So like, so many did I look upon;
The wood was full of faces, pale and wan.
None looked around.

The Housing of the Banners

Dry leaves and I went with them, drifting
slow
As might a sleep
That followed, waking, dreams it fain
would know
And could not keep;
Till leagues were lost: then rugged ground
ahead,
And stars, and then a silence, far out-
spread. . . .
So on a hillside wildflower stalks are shed
When reapers reap.

I saw them lie, down through the stubble
grass,
And ruined shade;
Not all were whole, not all full limbed,
alas,
But, sad betrayed
By ebbing starlight, up that hill lay all,
And down that hill and far beyond recall,
Tumbled in windrows widening; whose fall
Was unafraid.

Whose fingers reached toward daylight.
Came the stir
Of one small breeze,
As might a smile be, pitiful, from her

Whose child would please
With songs for sorrow; then, it seemed, a sigh
That candle flames might steady through went by,
And brought a shudder underneath that sky,
Of sore unease.

A miracle!—like hairs upon my head,
In cold accord
They stood; those multitudes of stretched-out dead,
Straight and restored.
And now were ranks, and now were flags unfurled,
And now went out a music on the world,
Wherefrom broke words, like bubbles, darkly swirled,—
Pricked with a sword.

"O warm earth air, to feel the dawn again
Down hillsides go;
To hear flocked cattle wake, and the refrain
Of far cocks blow!
What gifts we gave who stripped us of these things:

No more, ah, never, steeped in blossomy
springs,
Shall life brim over us in opening rings,
Or pale cheeks glow?

"Shall love be never rosied for our sakes,
More, as of old?
Nor sunlight fall through apple-boughs, in
flakes
Of fluttering gold?
Where shall we learn the like of sudden
feet
Coming down garden walks, beat to heart's
beat?
O precious life!—O passionate and sweet
Tales to be told!

"A murmur in the hills; a waft away
To beckoning deeds;
So—it were best to linger not a day:
Who hears it, heeds.
Spirits are dipped in starlight long before
They drink the sun, and starlight sways
them more.
Dreams;—or remembrance? Youth runs
bright on war,
And bleeds—and bleeds.

"There is a troth beyond the leap of eyes;
A pledge too far
For traveling light to flicker across skies
From star to star:
O warm earth air, no more, no more for
you
These banners, with their good brave scars.
They too
Are Truth's: you shall not stir them. O
be true,
Earth, as they are!

"And in the deep years be in mind of them,
When shadows go
Through forests, or touch hilltops, or a
stem
Lifts heart aglow
From treacherous glooms. Remember us,
awhile,
With gifts of open doorways, and a smile
Or two, when a bird sings in some sweet
aisle
We used to know."

I heard no more, for came a great fanfare
Of golden sound;

The Housing of the Banners

Awakening trumpets, mounting, stair by
stair,
In spiral round:
And lo, a cloudy roof and window stain
On ancient columns lifting their clear grain
Through such a calm as never breathes
again,—
So deep its swound.

On either side of that long nave there hung
Trophies most dear,
And all high deeds were there that song
has sung,—
Godlike to hear;
Only a little, yet—so far, so high—
Those walls were theirs the world will not
let die;
The cross upon the altar was like sky
A lake draws near.

The trumpets touched pride's pinnacle, and
broke,
In spray outspread;
A cloud of banners filled the air like smoke,
And all those dead
Shook earth as might embattled seraphim,

With one great shout. The silence seemed
to swim
With heavenly colour, as that youth's o'er-
brim
Was harvested.

I was alone, to drink the drowsy air
Of languid day;
The dawn remembered banners; stair by
stair
The birds climbed. They
Upon the hillside . . . they were poppies,
blown
With sleep. It is not grief's high part to
own
Tears. Rather, smiles! I plucked me,
all alone,
A red bouquet.

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